

House International Relations Committee
Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats
Statement of Chairman Elton Gallegly
Markup of H. Res. 328
June 21, 2005

The third resolution on today's agenda is H. Res. 328, a resolution recognizing the 25th anniversary of the workers' strikes in Poland in 1980 that led to the establishment of the Solidarity Trade Union.

H. Res. 328 conveys our recognition of the important role played by Solidarity in setting in motion the liberation of the nations of Eastern and Central Europe and the fall of the Soviet Union. It also honors the struggle and sacrifice of the people of Poland who risked their lives to restore democracy to their country.

Solidarity began in the shipyards of Gdansk with Polish workers unwilling to submit to the tyranny of the communist regime in Poland even after nearly forty years of oppression. A local electrician, Lech Walesa, coordinated the Solidarity strikes and ensured that the strikes were peaceful and orderly. After months of strikes, the Communist government yielded to the demands of the striking workers, including the release of all political prisoners, the broadcasting of religious services on television and radio, and the right to establish independent trade unions.

Throughout the 1980's, Solidarity grew to become a national movement with 10 million members, and Lech Walesa went on to become the first president of Poland after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Solidarity also had a critical role in establishing the democratic institutions that today are flourishing in Poland.

I urge the passage of H. Res. 328. I will now turn to Congressman Wexler for the purposes of making a statement.